12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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upper Tapajós began to supplement their sporadic income as warriors with the proceeds of trade. The early commerce with these Indians was carried on entirely by the itinerant traders, *regatões*—as late as 1852, there were no permanent Brazilian settlements south of Itaituba.[26] The region was still only occasionally penetrated by Brazilians, and trade was too small to warrant permanent commercial posts. The regatões served the purpose, traveling throughout the region in canoes of from five to ten tons capacity, selling the merchandise that they carried aboard, and receiving garden and forest products in return. Bates described this early trade as follows:

> They [the Mundurucú of the upper Tapajós] make large plantations of mandioca and sell the surplus produce, which amounts on the Tapajós to from 3000 to 5000 baskets (60 lb. each) annually to traders who ascend the river from Santarem between the months of August and January. They also gather large quantities of sarsaparilla, india-rubber, and Tonka beans, in the forests. The traders, on their arrival at the Campinas (the scantily wooded region inhabited by the main body of Mundurucús beyond the cataracts) have first to distribute their wares—cheap cotton clothes, iron hatchets, cutlery, small wares, and cashaca—amongst the minor chiefs and then wait three or four months for repayment in produce.[27]

As Bates noted, the trade was not conducted between individuals but between the trader and the village chiefs. The regatão gave merchandise to the chief and told him what he wanted in exchange; it was the chief's duty to exhort his people to production and, also, to distribute the trade goods among them. The people themselves had little or no contact with the traders, and only the chief had an account. It seems almost unnecessary to say that the exploitation of the illiterate Indians was extreme and that

[26] Bates, 1863, p. 233.
[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 243–244.

12:Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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431 food, as well as other articles, is between houses of more closely related females. But sharing is not structured exclusively by kinship; food was also given to our household [123] without question or request for payment. It was understood by the Indians, of course, that we would ultimately reciprocate by the distribution of manufactured articles, but the mutual exchanges existed on a general level between our house and the village and not between individuals in a trade of specific commodities.

The women of all village households frequently coöp- 476 erate in the harvesting of manioc and the preparation of • 244 farinha, especially when large quantities are to be pro- 252 duced. These occasions show lucidly how nebulous are 462 concepts of property among the savannah Mundurucú, for coöperation extends to the manufacture of farinha for trade to the whites. Men commonly arrange for the sale of [439] farinha to a trader and then call upon the women of their household to commence gathering and preparing the tubers. The women then invite women of other households to join them in the work. If the man who contracted the sale of farinha has an inadequate supply of manioc in his garden, the women frequently take the tubers from a garden in which there is a surplus, but which might belong to a member of another household. During the course of toasting the manioc flour, the invited women feel free to take portions of the completed product for their own households. The women of the house initiating production contribute most of the manioc and the bulk of the labor, and the productive process is, therefore, oriented to the household. The women of the other houses expect reciprocity at some time in the future, but there is no strict accounting of what is due in labor and manioc to individuals 422 or extended families.

574 That farinha belongs to whoever initiates its production 476

/3 cont./

*241 etwas Baumwolle und viel Mandioca-Wurzel, deren Mehl, in Koerbe und breite Blaetter von Palmen ... verpackt, sie an die Schiffer im Tapajóz zu verhandeln pflegen, seitdem sie in friedlichen Verkehr getreten sind...."

114 174 (I should like to insert here the following question: Did Martius have knowledge of traditions regarding a preagricultural era of the Mundurukú? It would seem so, for he writes in the above-quoted passage: "... the somewhat dense population can no longer depend exclusively on hunting and fishing"; this might indicate knowledge of a previous stage of the Mundurukú as hunters and gatherers but not as agriculturalists.)

*241 Still more or less in the same period, we have the testimony of Bates who speaks of the Mundurukú as agriculturalists and good workmen in various parts of his book, though he does so rather offhandedly; he notes the fertility of the land and the relatively small effort required of the Indian to bring forth the necessities /4/ of life; he tells of the large gardens of the Mundurukú which he saw on the Cuparí River and of how the women make flour; he says that the [439] Mundurukú carry out a certain amount of flour trading with the traders [244] of the Tapajós, and finally he states that aside from bitter-manioc [249] roots they raise sweet manioc, sweet potatoes, and sugar cane. (5)

5. Bates, 1944, passim.

114 There are practically no twentieth-century sources on the Mundurukú. The Franciscan mission has not yet published its materials on these Indians, and the work of Robert Murphy, who also studied this tribe in 1952-53, aside from a few articles, has not reached us. Thus, our knowledge is based almost exclusively on the meager data of the above-mentioned authors. Only Gonçalves

/11 cont./

*241 462 [912] The man digs or opens a hole in the ground (ikudn). He does this with a "digging stick," which consists of a strong rod, about 2 meters long, pointed at the lower end. The man pushes this rod hard into the ground, at an angle of 30 to 45 degrees, and then straightens it to a vertical position. This opens a small pit into which the woman who accompanies him puts two or at most three shoots of bitter manioc (8) (masok taisabm or masok ip maum). Removing the tip

[137] [244]

8. Maniva /bitter manioc/ is the name of the plant and the generic name of this vegetable (Manihot utilissima), while the roots, in the form of large tubercles, are called " mandioca." The bitter-manioc stalks, after the harvest, are saved for the next planting, when they are cut into pieces of 20 centimeters at most. These pieces, or " manioc shoots," are planted in the manner indicated above, for manioc does not propagate itself through seeds.

of the stick from the pit, she steps on /the pit/ to close it up and to pack the soil, but in such a way that the upper ends of the manioc shoots stick out in order to grow branches and leaves. Under the in- [177] fluence of civilization, nowadays the Munduruků are already using spades and even iron digging tools. The distance between the manioc pits is approximately 1 meter on the average.

*241 There is no doubt that the Munduruků carry out their horticultural work within a certain system, not only as regards the steps involved in clearing the plot but also in the planting itself. There is a sequence to the planting steps. In the time that elapses between the final burning and the planting, as a rule they sow watermelon, which thrives amazingly in the recently burned ground. Only then

/17 cont./

*241 which they were already cultivating, the introduction of new plants
177 /must have been/ all the more /uneven/. Here, the process may have been even slower.

262 Of even more recent acquisition, especially through the influence
137 of the Franciscan mission founded in 1911 on the Cururu River, are
177 products such as rice, beans, and various other plants which are
797 cultivated chiefly by the religious sisters, but which have been adopted by the Indians on a very modest scale. During the last decades, the following fruit trees have reached them: the mango tree, the orange tree, the lemon tree, the coffee shrub, and a certain type of cacao tree. They were already familiar with other products such as maize, pumpkins, etc., but cultivated them on a very small scale.

*241 8. Weeding or cleaning. We have described the planting. A few facts remain to be given concerning the garden tasks after planting. It is obvious that, once the planting itself has been done, the plot still requires a certain amount of care. Not right away, but after several weeks or months. /sic/ This is the weeding. Between the planting and the harvest, two weedings of the garden are usually carried out, the entire plot being cleaned. They speak of the first and second cleaning, or of the first and second weeding. This is done almost exclusively with the machete. There is no specific time set aside for this, because it depends to a large extent on the weather (rains) and on the need. The first weeding is called tip ogn, the second karit ogn.

●244 9. The harvest. The Indians generally use the regional term, "tearing up the plot," or "pulling up the bitter-manioc roots"—masok ta ogn. Within a year, the garden has matured and may be torn up. The manioc roots are pulled up by hand. The entire plot is not harvested at one time, but according to need. In order to pull up the manioc roots, a certain amount of strength and ability is required. Often, when the tubercles hold firm to overly hard ground,
[412] the Indian digs with the machete around the roots in order to loosen the soil and pull out the manioc root /18/ with greater ease. This same technique of using the machete as an auxiliary tool in the extraction of manioc roots is also used in gathering other tubercles, such as yams, sweet potatoes, etc.